

The CBHSQ Spotlight

CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
STATISTICS AND QUALITY



National Mental Health Services Survey
National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment
Services

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Telemedicine Services in Substance Use and Mental Health Treatment Facilities

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Telemedicine refers to the ability for healthcare providers, working from a distance using telecommunications technology, to communicate with patients, diagnose conditions, provide treatment, and discuss healthcare issues with other providers to ensure quality healthcare services are provided¹. Data from the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS) and the National Mental Health Services Survey (N-MHSS) shows an increase in the percentage of substance use and mental health treatment facilities providing telemedicine services between 2015 and 2020². Figure 1 shows that, in 2015, 25.7% of facilities providing substance use treatment indicated using telemedicine/ telehealth, and by 2020, the percentage increased to 58.6%³. For mental health treatment facilities, provision of telemedicine services increased from 22.2% in 2015 to 68.7% in 2020.

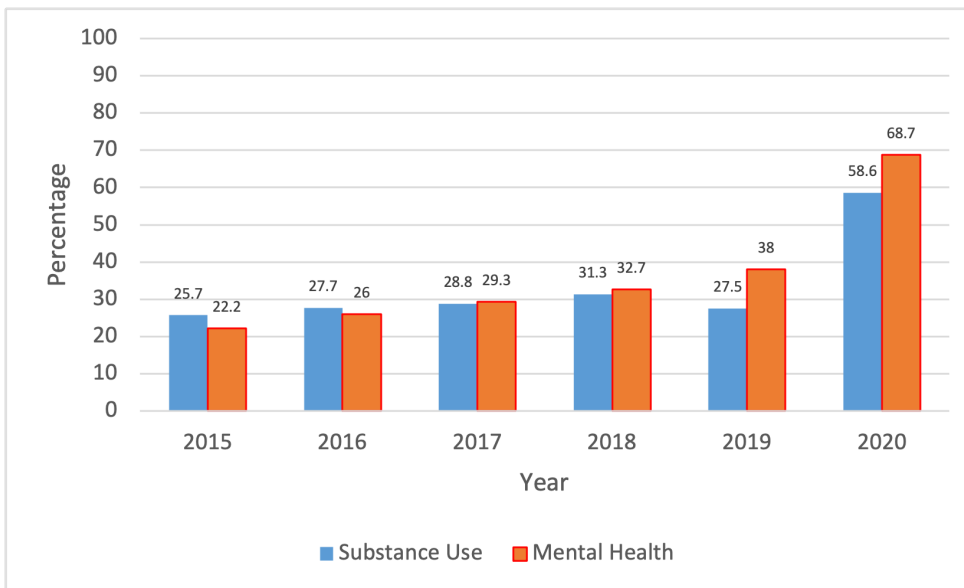


Figure 1: Percentage of Treatment Facilities Providing Telemedicine, United States, 2015-2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in more facilities having to adapt their services and increase their use of technology. Between 2019 and 2020, behavioral health treatment facilities experienced a sharp increase in the number of facilities providing telemedicine. The percentage of substance use treatment facilities with telemedicine services more than doubled in one year: from 27.5% in 2019 to 58.6% in 2020. For mental health facilities, this percentage increased from 38% in 2019 to 68.7%.

For more information on behavioral health treatment facilities, please visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

Additional information on telehealth modalities for behavioral health can be found at <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/telehealth-treatment-serious-mental-illness-substance-use-disorders>

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1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2021). Definitions. <https://info.nsumhss.samhsa.gov/definitions.htm>

2. The N-SSATS and the N-MHSS are annual facility-based surveys conducted by SAMHSA.

3. Until 2018, the N-SSATS asked about the frequency of telemedicine/telehealth services. For the purpose of this analysis, facilities that indicated not having or not being familiar with telemedicine were counted as not providing telemedicine services.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

This report is prepared by The Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ), SAMHSA.

